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TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [TW](#)
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-TAIWAN RELATIONS

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage January 7 on the fallout following the Legislative Yuan's decision Tuesday to amend the Act Governing Food Sanitation which bans the import of six types of "risky" U.S. beef products; on the National Communications Commission's decision to cut the local telecommunications service fees; and on the domestic concerns over the H1N1 vaccination. The pro-independence "Liberty Times" ran a front-page banner headline reading "[Regarding] U.S. Beef Case, U.S. State Department: Arms Sales [to Taiwan] Will Not Be Affected." The pro-unification "United Daily News" also ran a banner headline on page four, reading "Taiwan Inclined to Start Discussions with the United States over the U.S. Beef Controversy Immediately."

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a "Liberty Times" news analysis discussed the U.S. arms sales to Taiwan and said the U.S. beef issue is insignificant when compared with the United States' strategic security in East Asia. But Washington will adopt harsher retaliatory moves against Taiwan if the Ma administration continues to tilt toward China, to the extent that it will have an impact on U.S. strategic interests, the article added. A separate "Liberty Times" op-ed said if the U.S. beef issue and the U.S. arms sales to Taiwan put distance between Washington and Taipei, it will be exactly what China and Ma Ying-jeou are hoping for. A "United Daily News" editorial criticized Taiwan's Legislative Yuan for being overly-emotional and irrational in amending the Act Governing Food Sanitation and abrogating the U.S.-Taiwan beef protocol. An op-ed in the KMT-leaning "China Times" lambasted the Ma administration's "negative governance," which, according to the article, has expanded the U.S. beef crisis to a "U.S.-Taiwan crisis." End summary.

A) "China Tossing off Nasty Remarks Have All the More Highlighted the Importance of [U.S.] Arms Sales [to Taiwan]"

Journalist Luo Tian-pin wrote in an analysis in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 680,000] (1/7):

"...Even though Taipei and Washington are holding grudges because of the U.S. beef issue, the U.S. beef issue is simply insignificant when compared with the United States' strategic security [interests] in East Asia. This is the key as to why Washington has issued a statement saying that the U.S. beef issue is unrelated to U.S. arms sales [to Taiwan]. But if the Ma administration continues to tilt toward China to the extent that it will have an impact on the United States' strategic interests, the moves Washington will take and the retaliatory means it will use -- as well as the level [of the U.S. officials involved] and the harshness of its means -- will be incomparable with those of the U.S. beef case. Thus the Ma administration must ponder it clearly."

B) "Stratagem of U.S. Beef?"

Chuang Po-lin, former National Policy Adviser to President Chen Shui-bian, opined in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 680,000] (1/7):

"...U.S. beef issue will also involve [Taiwan's] arms procurements

from the United States. Except for the United States, no country in the world is willing to sell weapons to Taiwan, and Taiwan's lack of an ability to defend itself against an invasion is exactly the disastrous consequences caused by the one China policy and the '1992 Consensus' fabricated by [National Security Council Secretary-General] Su Chi, on which Ma Ying-jeou's major government policies are based. There is indeed no reason for Taiwan to offend the United States. If [the Ma administration] had communicated with the legislature before it signed [the beef deal with the United States] and had excluded those highly risky parts, it would not have drawn U.S. criticism for abrogating the deal [on the Taiwan side].

"Should the U.S. beef issue and arms procurements join to distance the United States and Taiwan, it will be exactly what China and Ma are hoping for. [Ma's] all-out efforts to promote ties with China and further to sign the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement, which will include [sections about] abandoning Taiwan's sovereignty, will put both the United States and the Taiwan people in an unfavorable position. Ma, as the leader of [Taiwan's] 23 million people, deserves to be condemned by public opinion and the Taiwan people, and this is what the mighty Taiwan people should do."

C) "Amending Laws and Abrogating the Agreement [Regarding U.S. Beef Imports] Are an Over-emotional and Irrational [Move]"

The pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] editorialized (1/7):

"... [Taiwan] must not underestimate the United States' reactions. AIT said: The legislature's decision to unilaterally abrogate the bilateral protocol the United States [and Taiwan] negotiated in good faith disregards both science-based standards as well as the findings of Taiwan's own risk assessment. AIT also said: This action by Taiwan undermines its credibility as a responsible trading partner and will make it more difficult for the United States to conclude future agreements to expand and strengthen bilateral trade and economic ties going forward. AIT added: It is particularly disappointing, as the United States has long been one of Taiwan's most important trade and investment partners, as well as the strongest supporter for Taiwan's active participation in the global trading system, including its membership in the World Trade Organization, and the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum. Putting such comments into vernacular language, it is like saying: Does Taiwan still want such an important friend like the United States? Will Taiwan remain a credible friend to the United States? Is there a Taiwan government that is able to sign deals [with other countries]?"

"If Taiwan were not irrational and over-emotional, it surely would be able to accurately interpret such comments from the United States and appropriately assess the major damage [Taiwan's amending the law and abrogating the beef deal] has done to our entire country. ... Our question is: No matter how big the prices [Taiwan will have to pay] for amending the law and abrogating the [beef] deal, has the Legislative Yuan ever tried its upmost to seek avoiding it in order to do good for our country? Or has it, amid the emotional and irrational political maneuverings, just added more fuel to the fire for our country? We also want to ask this question: Is amending the law and abrogating the [beef] deal the only or the best resolution? Or are there better resolutions that can bar the [imports of U.S.] offal while not requiring the amendment to the law and breaking the deal? ..."

D) "Legislature Going Out-of-Control: the Biggest Nightmare for Ma Ying-jeou"

Wang Chien-chuang, former president of "China Times," opined in the KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 120,000] (1/7):

"Immediately after the Legislative Yuan (LY) passed the amendments to the 'Act Governing Food Sanitation,' Ma Ying-jeou held a press conference at the Presidential Office in response [to the LY's move]. It was evident that Ma has upgraded the 'U.S. beef crisis,' which ought to be an internal affair, to a 'U.S.-Taiwan crisis' -- a diplomatic issue; he felt the need to step up to the line of fire to attend to follow-up issues, or it will not be able to eliminate diplomatic retaliation from the U.S. government. The U.S. beef

crisis is a result of a foolish mistake, and a synthesis of the Ma administration's 'negative governance' -- oligarch decision-making, the executive branch acting without authorization, paying little attention to the legislature, turning a blind eye to public opinion, and an extremely clumsy and ineffective crisis management strategy. All these have added up to enlarge the U.S. beef crisis into the biggest-ever setback for the Ma administration, or even for Ma himself, since he assumed office, which was even worse than the crisis caused by Typhoon Morakot [in August, 2009]. ..."

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